“Where time stands still” - National Archaeological Museum of Naples

1. Farnese Lion

00:21 – 00:41. Roman sculpture of white marble, with gray-blue colors, 2nd century AD. Roman sculptures of the lion are usually found as funerary monuments, according to the customs of the Hellenistic culture.

2. Farnese Bull

00:41 – 01:47. Dirka, according to ancient Greek myth, tied to the horns of a wild bull by Amphion and Zethus, in the presence of their mother Antiope, is condemned with a horrible death due to her mistreatment by Dirka. (https://bit.ly/3uT6s1h).

This sculptural complex of white marble, of the Severian period (years 222-235) with colossal dimensions of 3.3x3.3m and height of over 4m, is considered one of the world's masterpieces of sculpture. Its weight is almost 22 tons. It was excavated in several fragments from the Baths of Caracalla, Rome in 1546, with the funding of Cardinal Farnese, and then sent to Naples.

3. Apollo seated with lyre

01:48 – 02:38. Porphyry and marble sculpture, II century AD. God of oracles, healing, archery, music and arts, sunlight, knowledge, and protection of the young.
The head, hands, and lyre, were originally made of bronze, but were replaced by Carlo Albacini (1734 — 1813) with white marble. The statue originally represented a female subject, the personification of Rome, before the restorer altered its features.

4. Aphrodite Kallipygos

02:37 – 03:23. Ancient Greek goddess of love, beauty, pleasure, passion and fertility, called Venus by the Romans.
According to Homer's "Hymn to Aphrodite", she disguised herself as a Phrygian princess to seduce Anchises, a prince from Dardania and an ally of Troy, with whom she had a son, Aeneas, and only nine months later she discovered her divine identity. (for more information see: https://www.worldhistory.org/venus/)
This sculpture was discovered in Rome in the Domus Aurea. Its provenance is unknown, but it is thought to have been based on a lost Hellenistic bronze original dating from c. III BC. Some parts of the sculpture were restored by Carlo Albacini (1734 — 1813).
World History: https://www.worldhistory.org/venus/

Wikipedia: https://bit.ly/3ctaXtq

5. Flora Farnese

03:23 – 03:58. Goddess of flowers and the spring season.
Colossal Roman statue, reworked from the Hellenistic original.

6. Greek warrior carrying a boy

03:58 - 04:33. It is thought to be Achilles, holding a son, who appears to be dead. The work of the anonymous Roman author, from the end of the II cent. AD. The Greek Hero with Child, also known as the Statuary Group depicting Neoptolemus and Astianatte.

The sculptural group was found in the excavations of the Baths of Caracalla in Rome. Thus it was first exhibited in the courtyard of Palazzo Farnese, and then, when the transfer of the Farnese collection to Naples was completed at the behest of Ferdinand IV of Bourbon, initiated by Charles of Bourbon a few decades earlier, in 1787 the Greek hero was transferred to the capital of the kingdom and placed in the royal villa, where other Roman sculptures also found place. In 1826, however, the sculpture found definitive accommodation in the archaeological museum of Naples where it is still exhibited today.

The statue is the result of important restorations from the Bourbon period which mainly affected the heads of the characters. For this reason, the certain attribution of the scene is still of uncertain interpretation today.

What is certain is that a Greek warrior is depicted holding a completely naked and now lifeless child. The merciless gaze of the warrior and the pride with which he holds the corpse suggest that he killed the boy. However, the subjects could refer to several characters: to Neoptolemus, in the act of killing the little Astianatte; or to Achilles and Troilus; or again to Atamante and Learco.

The head of the Greek hero, not relevant, is instead of the emperor Commodus.

Wikipedia (Italian): https://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eroe_greco_con_fanciullo

7. Farnese Hecules

04:34 – 05:08. Cited from Wikipedia, https://bit.ly/3AYausz : "The "*Farnese Hercules"* (Italian: *Ercole Farnese*) is an ancient statue of Hercules, probably an enlarged copy made in the early third century AD and signed by Glykon, who is otherwise unknown; the name is Greek but he may have worked in Rome. Like many other Ancient Roman sculptures it is a copy or version of a much older Greek original that was well known, in this case a bronze by Lysippos (or one of his circle) that would have been made in the fourth century BC. This original survived for over 1500 years until it was melted down by Crusaders in 1205 during the Sack of Constantinople. The enlarged copy was made for the Baths of Caracalla in Rome (dedicated in 216 AD), where the statue was recovered in 1546, and is now in the Museo Archeologico Nazionale in Naples. The heroically-scaled *Hercules* is one of the most famous sculptures of antiquity, and has fixed the image of the mythic hero in the European imagination.

The *Farnese Hercules* is a massive marble statue, following a lost original that was cast in bronze through a method called “lost wax casting”. It depicts a muscular, yet weary, Hercules leaning on his club, which has the skin of the Nemean lion draped over it. In myths about Heracles, killing the lion was his first task. He has just performed one of the last of “The Twelve Labours”, which is suggested by the “apples of the Hesperides” he holds behind his back.

The type was well known in antiquity, and among many other versions a Hellenistic or Roman bronze reduction, found at Foligno is in the Musée du Louvre. A small Roman marble copy can be seen over the Museum of the Ancient Agora, Athens.”

8. Kneeling Persian

05:09 – 05:37. Roman sculpture, c. 98-117 CE also known as the "Farnese Barbarian". The use of coloured marbles allowed for a polychromatic sculpture without the use of paint or other pigments.

Source: World History Encyclopedia, https://bit.ly/3TDTvDe

9. Farnese Leopard

05:37 – 05:54. This beautifull sculpture of the leopard is done in colorful pavonazzo marble.

10. Homer/Philosopher

05:54 – 06:27. Homer, the author of the Iliad and the Odyssey, the two epic poems which are the pearls of ancient world literature. It is interesting that Homer wears a pleat that is identical to the pleat that Albanians still wear today.

This Roman marble sculpture, made by an unknown author in the c. 1. money e.r. was found in the "Villa of Papyri" (It.: "Villa dei Papiri") in the ruins of Herculaneum during the excavations that were made in the c. 18. This rich city of antiquity was covered by the volcanic eruption of Vesuvius and has not yet been fully discovered.

11. Pseudo-Seneca

06:27 – 06:50. “The Pseudo-Seneca is a Roman bronze bust of the late 1st century BC that was discovered in the Villa of the Papyri at Herculaneum in 1754, the finest example of about two dozen examples depicting the same face. It was originally believed to depict Seneca the Younger, the notable Roman philosopher, because its emaciated features were supposed to reflect his Stoic philosophy. However, modern scholars agree it is likely a fictitious portrait, probably intended for either Hesiod or Aristophanes. It is thought that the original example was a lost Greek bronze of ca. 200 BC.”

Source: Wikipedia, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pseudo-Seneca

12. Drunken Satyr

06:50 – 07:22. “One of the most significant finds recovered in the 1750s was a first-century bronze statue of a Drunken Satyr in dynamic motion. The middle-aged figure was praised by the eighteenth-century German scholar J. J. Winckelmann as one of the most beautiful bronze statues to survive from antiquity. The satyr, a mythical follower of the wine god Bacchus, wears a pine wreath with flower clusters and has pointed ears, small horns, wild hair, and wattles.”

Source: ArtnowLA, https://bit.ly/3dhwpSx

13. Musical Instruments

07:22 - 07:50. Musical instruments found in Pompeii.

For more information on music in Pompeian times:

https://bit.ly/3S9517W

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i8319iDLcZ8

https://www.jstor.org/stable/44291722

14. Cockfight

07:50 – 08:23. Roman mosaic from Pompeii. Two cocs face each other in a fight. In the background is the table with gifts for the winner: a caduceus and a palm branch as symbols of victory and a bag of money in the middle.

15. Plato's Academy

08:23 – 09:04. Pompeii mosaic showing a debate of thinkers, philosophers, astronomers or others, where the canine figure appears to be Plato (third from the left).

“The Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Napoli suggests the man to the right of Plato is a visitor because he keeps his hands and arms hidden under his cloak, as a sign of respect. It further surmises the first on the left could be Heraclites Pontico, the second on the left is Lysias, the second on the right is Senocrates, and the man to the very farthest right is Aristotle; however, no explanation is given for why these names are attached, though all were associated with Plato.”

Excerpt from: "Plato’s Circle in the Mosaic of Pompeii", by Katherine Joplin, published in ELECTRUM MAGAZINE, https://bit.ly/3Dz7apx

16. Battle of Issus/Alexander the Great Mosaic

09:04 – 09:41. The Alexander Mosaic, also known as the Battle of Issus Mosaic, is a Roman floor mosaic from the House of the Faun in Pompeii (a presumed imitation of a painting by Philoxenus of Eretria or Apelles, 4th century BC) dating from 100 BC It depicts a battle between the armies of Alexander the Great and Darius III of Persia and measures 2.72 by 5.13 meters.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alexander_Mosaic

https://www.worldhistory.org/Battle_of_Issus/

"The Ptolemy Painting? Alexander's "right-hand man" and the origins of the Alexander Mosaic", by Joshua J. Thomas, Published online by Cambridge University Press, 02 November 2021, https://bit.ly/3QTboeH

Photo by: Berthold Werner, https://bit.ly/3oFFExN

17. Still Life, mosaic

09:41 – 10:15. Mosaic from the Pompeii Collection, House of the Faun, early 1st century BC.

18. Portrait of a Pompeian woman

10:15 – 10:47. The "Portrait of a Woman" mosaic was found in the tablinum, an open living room that could be curtained off from public view, in a house in Pompeii. It dates back to the Julio-Claudian period, the first half of the 1st century BCE (1-49 BCE). The portrait reproduces the features of a Pompeian woman of high rank: her face is framed by dark hair and tied up according to the style of the period. She is wearing pearl earrings and a pearl necklace with a pendant of gold and precious stones. The woman's features are realistically depicted which suggests the importance of the mosaic for the owner of the house.

The majority of mosaics decorated the floors of private luxury villas and houses. Though, an expensive addition to the property, the mosaics required little maintenance and lasted a lifetime.

Source: https://www.dailyartmagazine.com/roman-floor-mosaics-stories/

19. Marcus Aurelius

10:47 – 11:20. Marble statue made of the union of two statues, with head of emperor Marcus Aurelius, 160-170 A.D.

20. Lucius Aurelius Verus

11:20 – 11:54. Marble statue of the emperor Lucius Aurelius Verus with the idealized body of Diomedes, 160-170 A.D.

21. Portrait of Terentius Neo and his wife

11:54 – 12:34. A fresco of a Pompeian couple with stylus, wax tablets, and papyrus roll from about 75 CE, found in the House of Terentius Neo , shows a man holding a papyrus scroll and a woman holding a stylus to her lips for writing on the wax tablets that she holds in her other hand. This fresco, which is sometimes called Portrait of Terentius Neo, is one of several surviving Roman portraits depicting the symbols of literacy.

"This couple, who did not come from the very highest ranks of the Pompeian aristocracy, probably chose to be depicted in this way as a mark of their status—they belonged to the ranks of those who were literate, and they wished to display the fact. In this sense, the portrait is evidence that literacy was far from universal in Roman Pompeii. But it is none the less an impressive fact, typical of the Roman world and difficult to parallel before modern times, that a provincial couple should have chosen to be painted in a way that very specifically celebrated a close relationship with the written word, on the part of both the man and his wife" (Ward-Perkins, The Fall of Rome and the End of Civilization [2005] 162-63, plate 7.10).

Sources:

https://www.throughetternity.com/en/blog/things-to-do/7-masterpieces-naples-archaeological-museum.html#

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Portrait_of_Terentius_Neo

https://www.historyofinformation.com/detail.php?id=2117

22. Aphrodite, Louvre-Naples type

12:34 – 13:09. Roman marble sculpture of the 1st century, made on the basis of the Greek original of the 5th cent. B.C.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

- Illustrated guide to the National Museum in Naples, https://bit.ly/3ysJdwI
- Extensive photographic collection of archaeological remains of Pompeii: "PompeianPictures", https://bit.ly/3BpBIan
- Latin, Italian and English Glossary, provided to pompeiiinpictures by Michael Binns, University of Durham, Department of Archaeology, https://bit.ly/3Dz9psX.